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DEPT FOR EAP/K, EAP/PD, INR/EAP/K AND INR/IL/P  
TREASURY FOR OASIA/WINGLE  
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STATE PASS USDA ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAS/ITP  
STATE PASS DOL/ILAB SUDHA HALEY  
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SUBJECT: PRESS BULLETIN - December 8, 2008

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Seoul Shinmun  
18th National Assembly's First Regular Session Ends Tomorrow,  
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#### Domestic Developments

- [1](#)1. Former U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Alexander Vershbow, in a Dec. 5 speech organized by the Korea Economic Institute (KEI), called for Seoul to show flexibility in promptly dealing with the KORUS FTA.  
(Chosun, Segye)

#### International News

- [1](#)1. The Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear programs will resume in Beijing today. (All) Given the North's insistence that the issue of nuclear sampling should be dealt with at the next phase of negotiations, this round of the Six-Party Talks is expected to be

very difficult. Chief ROK Delegate to the Six-Party Talks Kim Sook was quoted as telling reporters yesterday: "I'm not very optimistic about the talks." (Chosun, JoongAng, Dong-a, Hankook, all TVs)

¶2. According to a diplomatic source in Beijing, North Korea recently delivered to the U.S. its position that additional corresponding measures are necessary in order to include nuclear sampling in a verification protocol. (Segye)

¶3. Seoul, Washington and Tokyo, meanwhile, are considering a compromise proposal to include the word, "nuclear sampling," in a s-e-c-r-e-t memorandum. (JoongAng)

¶4. North Korea, in a Dec. 6 statement by a Foreign Ministry spokesman, said that it will not talk with Japan in the upcoming Six-Party Talks because Tokyo refuses to provide promised energy aid for Pyongyang. (JoongAng, Hankyoreh)

¶5. The chief ROK and North Korean delegates to the Six-Party Talks will meet today in Beijing for a bilateral meeting. An ROKG official was quoted as saying: "The two sides will discuss the North Korean nuclear issue, but if time permits, they will also discuss inter-Korean relations." (All)

## Media Analysis

### Six-Party Talks/North Korea

All the ROK media today gave wide play to today's resumption in Beijing of the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear programs. Most newspapers predicted that the issue of including sampling of North Korea's nuclear facilities into a verification protocol would be the biggest bone of contention during this round of talks and that the talks would be difficult, given the North's insistence that the nuclear sampling issue should be dealt with at the next phase of negotiations. The ROK media also noted that the Dec. 4-5 preparatory meetings in Singapore between the chief U.S. and North Korean nuclear negotiators failed to produce results on the sampling issue. Chief ROK Delegate to the Six-Party Talks Kim Sook was widely quoted as telling reporters yesterday: "I'm not very optimistic about the talks." Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo reported today that the ROK, the U.S. and Japan are considering a compromise proposal to include the word, "nuclear sampling," in a s-e-c-r-e-t memorandum. Conservative Segye Ilbo's front-page report, meanwhile, cited a diplomatic source in Beijing as saying that North Korea recently delivered to the U.S. its position that additional corresponding measures are necessary to codify nuclear sampling into a verification protocol. Moderate Hankook Ilbo editorialized: "North Korea seems to be aiming to use the sampling issue as a bargaining chip at the U.S.-North Korea normalization talks, rather than delay the completion of the second phase of North Korea's denuclearization process for no reason. There are also some expectations that North Korea may take a compromising attitude at this negotiation. Observers speculate that North Korea will take a hard line in inter-Korean relations while indirectly showing its commitment to negotiations with the U.S. ahead of the launch of the new U.S. administration. In this regard, it is desirable that we should read North Korea's intention well and induce the communist state to take even a small step forward from its initial stance."

Most of the ROK media also gave attention today to a Dec. 6 statement by a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman that North Korea will not talk with Japan in the upcoming Six-Party Talks because Tokyo refuses to provide promised energy aid for Pyongyang.

Conservative Chosun and Segye Ilbo and right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo carried inside-page reports on Saturday citing ruling Grand National Party (GNP) Rep. Chung Mong-joon as telling Korean correspondents in Washington on Dec. 4: "I was told during a meeting with former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger that North Korea last month asked the former Secretary of State to visit Pyongyang, and former Secretary Kissinger responded to the North's offer by saying that he would visit Pyongyang if two conditions were met: a U.S. president officially asks him to do so as an envoy, and the North pledges to dismantle its nuclear programs."

### Opinions/Editorials

U.S. Automakers' Blaming of the ROK Preposterous  
(Dong-a Ilbo, December 8, 2008, Page 27)

United Auto Workers (UAW) President Ron Gettelfinger vehemently criticized the ROK's car market and automakers when asking for financial assistance at a hearing. He stated, "While the ROK

exports 669,000 cars to the U.S., the U.S. exports 5,000 cars (to the ROK). How can we compete with such a nation?" and this remark was broadcast live nationwide in the U.S. He also argued in late September, "It is unfair that the ROK's import tariff is higher than that of the U.S."

The best-selling vehicles in the U.S. are Japanese. Last year, Japanese carmakers' market share in the U.S. hit a record high of 28.6 percent. Gettelfinger's remarks are tantamount to "taking his anger out on the wrong person." He is attacking the ROK with the aim of hiding UAW's wrongdoings and receiving a financial bailout. His comment on the ROK's import tariff is also incorrect. While the ROK and the U.S. impose 8 and 2.5 percent tariffs, respectively, on passenger cars, import tariffs on trucks are 10 percent in the ROK and 25 percent in the U.S. In addition, when the ROK-U.S. Free Trade Agreement takes effect, the ROK will lift tariffs on all kinds of vehicles, but the U.S. will remove tariffs only on vehicles with engines smaller than 3,000cc.

Through his statements, Gettelfinger clearly intends to turn around the U.S.'s negative public opinion about Big Three automakers and their labor unions. Even U.S. lawmakers do not hesitate to say, "Financial bailout is meaningless now. We should let a couple of companies go bankrupt." Forbes.com criticized the UAW by saying, "The Big Three sold their souls to the devil unions."

Relying on the strength of its 460,000 members, the UAW pressured the companies to pay health insurance premiums for retirees and their families and helped them to live in the lap of luxury, even

providing Viagra. Now that their companies are on the verge of collapse, the UAW is pleading, "Please save us," but the reaction of Americans is cool.

North Korea's Nuclear Verification Needs Patience  
(Hankook Ilbo, December 8, 2008, Page 39)

The Six-Party Talks will open the meeting of chief negotiators in Beijing today to discuss adopting the nuclear verification protocol. Their goal is to put nuclear verification principles in a written agreement. However, since North Korea is refusing to accept nuclear sampling, a key means of nuclear verification, at the Yongbyon nuclear facilities, the negotiations are expected to face rough going. In order to overcome the biggest hurdle in the second phase of denuclearization, the members of the Six-Party Talks should put their heads together and try to persuade the North to change its stance.

When U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill visited Pyongyang in October, the North reportedly made it clear that it will accept sample-taking in principle. However, it is still arguing that sample-taking should be allowed not in the second phase of denuclearization but in the third nuclear dismantlement phase. No compromise was reached, either, at the talks between Assistant Secretary Hill and his North Korean counterpart Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan in Singapore on December 4-5.

North Korea seems to be aiming to use the sampling issue as a bargaining chip at the U.S.-North Korea normalization talks, rather than delay the completion of the second phase of North Korea's denuclearization process for no reason. This is why, observers say, Pyongyang is avoiding including sample-taking in the protocol. As a result, (Six-Party nations) are discussing compromises, such as finding another way of taking samples or dividing verification measures into several steps, but it is not certain whether North Korea will accept it.

However, there are also some expectations that North Korea may take a compromising attitude at this negotiation. Observers speculate that North Korea will take a hard line in inter-Korean relations while indirectly showing its commitment to negotiations with the U.S. in advance of the launch of the new U.S. administration. In this regard, it is desirable that we should read North Korea's intention well and induce the communist state to take even a small step forward from its initial stance.

The second phase of North Korea's denuclearization process (nuclear disablement) and the provision of heavy fuel oil to North Korea was

supposed to be completed by October. However, it has been delayed to date due to the North's stubborn attitude. Furthermore, Japan's refusal to provide heavy fuel oil to North Korea in protest over the abduction issue is also leading (relevant countries) to look for other countries to replace Japan. Simply criticizing North Korea will not make things better. The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is a goal that can be achieved only after a long and difficult process. This is why we have to have patience pursuing this goal.

#### Features

U.S. State Department Asks Ambassadors Overseas to Submit

Resignations

(Dong-a Ilbo, December 6, 2008, Page 8)

By Washington Correspondent Ha Tae-won

It is routine during the transition toward a new administration... sources say, "Ambassador Stephens is highly likely to stay in her post, but it is not guaranteed."

AFP reported on December 4 that, in advance of the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama on January 20, the U.S. Department of State has asked some 170 ambassadors serving abroad to tender their resignations.

This is aimed at ensuring the U.S. President's prerogative to appoint ambassadors to U.S. missions overseas. It is customary for career ambassadors to submit their resignations right after the U.S. presidential election every four years.

This also applies to U.S. Ambassador to the ROK Kathleen Stephens, who has been serving in the ROK for less than three months since assuming her post in September.

If history is any guide, career diplomats, not political appointees, usually stay in place unless they make a serious mistake or complete their two- to three-year term. For example, U.S. Ambassadors to the ROK William Gleysteen and Richard Walker stayed on in 1981 and 1985, respectively.

When an incumbent Ambassador resigns with a change of government, the Charge d'Affaires takes up the duties of the Ambassador. For instance, Ambassador Donald Gregg resigned in 1993 when the Bill Clinton administration was launched, and Stephen Bosworth resigned in 2001 when George W. Bush took office.

Sources in Washington said, "As of now, (Ambassador Stephens) is highly likely to stay in her post, but no one can guarantee what decision the next U.S. President will make," adding, "Although the new administration could consult with its ally, the ROKG, it is not a necessary procedure."

Stephens